2 LUNATIC HISTORIES: JOSEPH WORKMAN"S CONSTRUCTIONS OF DISEASE AT THE PROVINCIAL LUNATIC ASYLUM, TORONTO: ASYLUM AS CURE

(The Temporary Asylum: Star-Chamber and Archive)

When a new jail was opened in East Toronto, on January 21, 1841, seventeen lunatics incarcerated in the Old York Jail became the first official patients of the Temporary Asylum.[vi] In 1846 a second temporary asylum was established, ironically enough, in the old Parliament Buildings on Front Street. These buildings were used as an asylum until 1850, when the Provincial Lunatic Asylum opened on the site presently occupied by the Queen Street Mental Health Centre. This decade of the Temporary Asylum was marked by administrative difficulties stemming from "differences between the board of directors and the superintendents" (Burgess, 22). A parliamentary act of 1839 had vested all property in the Board, given the Board control over the hiring and firing of the staff, and inadequately defined the powers of the Superintendent. Successive Medical Superintendents clashed with the Board and were dismissed: Drs. Rees, Telfer, and Park all went the same way. The result was "anarchy and neglect of the patients" (23).